

and without mistakes. Fifteen hours after starting we once again stood atop North Howser Tower, having made its first one-day free ascent (21 hours round-trip from camp). With loads of 5.10 crack climbing and a short crux, Hey Kool-Aid! (24 pitches, VI 5.11+) is the second free route on the west face.

CHRIS WEIDNER, AAC

CANADIAN ROCKIES

Summary. After the incredibly dry summer of 2004, which turned faces like that of North Twin into rockfall-strafed nightmares and peaks like Mt. Alberta into overgrown scrambles, the summer of 2005 turned out to be one of the wettest on record. The big peaks never cleaned up, curtailing serious alpine activity. The wet calendar summer was followed by a beautiful Indian summer in October and into November. Unfortunately the fall dried off much of the summer moisture, resulting in an above average, but not exceptional, 2005-06 ice season. Nonetheless, climbers took advantage of fine early-season ice and alpine conditions. Classic "hard" routes like the Andromeda Strain (700m, V M6) in the Columbia Icefields and The Drip at the Centre of the Universe (400m, WI5+) in Kananaskis Country were both climbed during this time. In a solo effort, J. Mills contributed The Brink (450m, IV WI3 5.8): the route follows a couloir on the northeast face of an unnamed summit in the front ranges southwest of Nordegg. Two interesting mini-alpine routes went up on the north face of the unassuming-looking Wedge in Kananaskis Country. Klatu Verata N... (200m, M6), by Robert Rogoz and Raphael Slawinski, was a warm-up for The Maul (300m, M7), by Will Gadd and Slawinski. The second route especially offered high-quality naturally protected thin ice and mixed climbing up a compelling line.

The east face of the East End of Rundle, affectionately known as EEOR, is visible from every bar in Canmore. For this reason the obvious line which most seasons tries to form between the rock routes Balzac and Dropout had been sieged, aided, rapelled into, just about everything but actually climbed. Last November Dana Ruddy and Eamonn Walsh finally remedied this state of affairs by climbing Balzout Direct (500m, M6 A0 WI5) from bottom to top in a long day. They did, however, French-free their way up the bolt ladder leading to a hanging dagger. In January Slawinski and Ian Welsted repeated the route, freeing the bolt ladder onsite, at give-or-take hard M8. For those with eyes to see, another dribble of ice lurked a few hundred meters to the left, in the huge corner left of the Guides' Route. In February Ben Firth, Slawinski, and Walsh climbed some ten pitches of moderate snowed-up rock, followed by five increasingly difficult ice and mixed pitches to put up The Great White Fright (500m, M6), so named for the massive cornice overhanging the route. Although technically easier than Balzout Direct, the route proved quite adventurous, the crux pitch featuring climbing up to a hanging dagger, with shaky pins for protection.

On the pure-ice front, in early December Rich Marshall and Jon Walsh were rewarded for their patience when a line they had been eying for several years finally formed to the ground (well, almost). Situated up the Blaeberry River drainage west of Golden, Blaeberry Express (220m, M6 WI6) was one of the most aesthetic new routes of the season and quickly received several repeat ascents. The Elk Lakes area, just across the Divide into British Columbia from the Kananaskis Lakes, likely saw more activity this past season than in all other seasons com-

bined. While this might be an exaggeration, the area did prove popular, with most attention centering on EMF (140m, WI4). Originally climbed with a short section of aid to an unformed dagger, the route this past season formed as a beautiful pure ice route. Two new routes also went up, the ephemeral Nightmare Before Christmas (150m, WI6), by Slawinski and Walsh, and Elk Horn (70m, WI5-), by Janes Ales and Donald Otten.

Between trips abroad to Patagonia and such, Jon Walsh had an excellent winter season. In January, with Chris Brazeau and Jon Simms, he finished off Drama Queen (140m, WI6 M7) on the famous Stanley Headwall, a route he and Simms had started the previous season. Two pitches of scrappy, traditionally protected mixed climbing led to an amazing pitch of ice up splattered mushrooms, topped off by bolt-protected dry-tooling to a dagger overhanging the base of the route. Sean Isaac also had a good season on the Headwall, completing two new multi-pitch routes. Dawn of the Dead (M8+) is a two-pitch direct start to the upper ice (WI5+) of The Day After les Vacances de Mr. Hulot. Isaac and Dave Thomson, the father (or is it grandfather?) of new-wave mixed climbing in the Canadian Rockies, had started the route some years ago, but never did finish it until this past winter. Taking advantage of good ice conditions on the Headwall, Thomson came out of quasi-retirement to complete the project in December. Toward the end of the winter Isaac teamed with Shawn Huisman to contribute Rhamnusia, a completely independent line left of the classic Nemesis. The route featured both traditionally and bolt-protected mixed climbing to a steep ice finish.

Things were relatively quiet on the winter alpine front proper. In January, in a fine effort, visiting Quebecois climbers Yan Mongrain and Maxime Turgeon climbed the Andromeda Strain. Winter climbing in the Canadian Rockies is rarely a walk in the park, and this was no exception. Between deep snow in the lower couloir and a wrong turn on the descent, the roundtrip took over 30 hours. Farther south, in Kananaskis Country, on the east face of Mt. Sarraill, Slawinski and Eamonn Walsh added an extension to the ice route Riders on the Storm (500m, WI4), climbed the previous winter by Valeriy Babanov and Slawinski. Slawinski and Walsh continued up for another 300m on challenging snow to the summit ridge and creatively named the line Riders on the Storm Integrale.

One of the finest creations of the winter season came in early April. Jon Walsh and Carolyn Ware capped off a remarkable tour of Canadian Rockies ice, which saw them link up many classic lines in single-day efforts, by climbing The Shadow (220m, M6 WI6+R), a thin and narrow line of ice up the prominent corner to the left of the hard classic Riptide. On the first attempt, carrying but a meager rock rack, they stopped a pitch short of the top of the climb. Returning with a beefed-up rack and a bolt kit to back up one of the belays, they pushed the route to the top of the cliff.

RAPHAEL SLAWINSKI, *Canada, AAC*

CANADIAN ARCTIC

Axel Heiberg Island, ski traverse and first ascents. Over six weeks, from April 19 to May 31, our team made an unsupported north-to-south traverse of the island. The team consisted of Louise Jarry (Canada), Vicky Lytle (USA/Australia), Sarah Boyle (Australia), and I (Canada). A three-hour charter ski-plane flight from Resolute Bay dropped us off on the south side of Rens Fiord. Each skier pulled a pulk 1.75m long and weighing 80 to 100kg, with all their equipment, food,